

ONLINE DATA SERVICES AT THE BELGIAN MARINE DATACENTRE

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Over the past few years, the Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models (MUMM) has built up a centre of human and technical expertise oriented towards the management and the analysis of marine environmental data. The Belgian Marine Data Centre (BMDC) serves as national repository and processing centre for marine and environmental data and ensures a continuous and scientifically sound data flow between data producers and end-users of marine and environmental data collected in the frame of national and international research and monitoring programmes. The data cover most domains of oceanology as there are: physico-chemical, optical parameters, biodiversity, hydrodynamics, sedimentology, geography and human interest. Most of the datasets relate to the Belgian Continental Shelf, the Scheldt Estuary and its surrounding areas.

To promote the use of a high variety of data sets, different tools are constantly being developed and are presented on our website (www.mumm.ac.be/datacentre).

An online interface to the integrated database on the quality of the marine environment was developed. This database mainly contains the results of measurements and observations in situ and laboratory analyses of air, water, sediment and biota samples. The contents of the database can be consulted by means of an extensive online inventory. In the updated request form, the user friendliness and the taxonomic selection, supporting the use of common names, is improved. Specific project data sets are easily accessed. Data can freely be downloaded.

A lot of documentation accompanying the data is online available. The strongest feature of this system is the common underlying structure for different kinds and sources of data. This opens the possibility to compare biodiversity data, physico-chemical data, sedimentological data and historical data.

Another database at MUMM, the real-time data acquisition system 'ODAS' stores the physical and chemical parameters measured onboard of the research vessel RV Belgica since 1984. The along-track data are published online shortly after the end of the measurement campaign together with all other information like the campaign reports, cruise tracks,... This is a valuable source of basic information for the scientists.